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# Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

**6139**th meeting

Thursday, 11 June 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

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| *President:* | Mr. İlkin | (Turkey) |
| *Members:* | Austria | Mr. Mayr-Harting |
| | Burkina Faso | Mr. Tiendrébéogo |
| | China | Mr. Du Xiaocong |
| | Costa Rica | Mr. Guillermet |
| | Croatia | Mr. Vilović |
| | France | Mr. Ripert |
| | Japan | Mr. Takasu |
| | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | Mr. Dabbashi |
| | Mexico | Mr. Heller |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Dolgov |
| | Uganda | Mr. Rugunda |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Parham |
| | United States of America | Ms. DiCarlo |
| | Viet Nam | Mr. Le Luong Minh |

## Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan**

**The President**: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Holmes to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. John Holmes. I now give the floor to Mr. Holmes.

**Mr. Holmes**: Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on my visit to the Sudan early this past month. That this was briefly delayed until today is a good indication of the many competing challenges we face around the world. The aim of the visit was to review the humanitarian situation in the areas most affected by the Government's decision on 4 March to close three national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and expel 13 international NGOs, and to promote an improved operating environment between the Government and the humanitarian community, based on the development of genuine confidence and trust.

In addition to meetings in Khartoum, I visited North Darfur, and in particular the newly displaced populations in Zam Zam camp, just outside El Fasher. I also visited South Sudan to assess the extent of recent tribal violence, continuing humanitarian needs there and progress towards sustainable recovery.

The overall background is continuing severe humanitarian problems in Darfur, with 4.7 million people still requiring assistance, and major humanitarian needs in other areas too.

We continue to believe that the expulsions of 4 March were wrong and unjustified, to deplore the often brutal way in which they were carried out and to regret the increased dangers created for hundreds of thousands of people in need in Darfur and elsewhere. The difficult weeks that followed the expulsions were filled with reports of violence targeting NGOs — both those expelled and those remaining in Darfur — and negative rhetoric in the media that put agencies and individuals at increased risk. However, I am pleased to note that consistent efforts to explain the risks, to reduce tension and to seek a constructive dialogue — not least those led by United States Special Envoy Major General Scott Gration and influential Member States in the region — have begun to result in some positive developments.

Following the joint assessment carried out in March by the Government and the United Nations, the humanitarian community has worked with Government line ministries to fill the most critical life-saving gaps left by the expulsions. While it has not been possible to do this in a fully satisfactory or sustainable way, it seems that these efforts have significantly narrowed the gaps and prevented, for now at least, the feared extra humanitarian crises and deaths. These joint efforts have also begun to contribute to a more constructive working environment between the Government and the humanitarian community.

The Government has also taken some important steps towards rebuilding the cooperation architecture that was so badly fractured in March. It has reaffirmed its acceptance of and support for the 2007 Joint Communiqué on the facilitation of humanitarian assistance in Darfur as the principal framework for cooperation. In addition, ministerial decrees have extended technical agreements for NGOs, ensured the return to a previously agreed but ignored travel notification system and guaranteed multiple entry visas for all NGO workers. Government representatives have made clear, including during my visit, that help from international humanitarian agencies and NGOs is welcome and valued, and have said publicly and privately that not only remaining NGOs, but also new NGOs, including NGOs with new names and new logos, are welcome. Four of the expelled NGOs have taken advantage of this latter flexibility and this week completed initial registration processes in Khartoum. The level of hostile comment in the media has also been reduced.

On 7 May in Khartoum, I co-chaired, with the federal Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, the first meeting of an expanded high-level committee that was originally formed to oversee the implementation of the Joint Communiqué in 2007. It now includes senior Government representatives from all the concerned and influential ministries and a wider spectrum of Member States and regional organizations, as well as NGOs. It was agreed that the committee would henceforth monitor not only the implementation of bureaucratic agreements detailed in the Joint Communiqué, but also wider issues such as the protection of civilians, voluntary and sustainable returns, independent and joint assessments and ways to improve the safety and security situation of humanitarian staff in Darfur. The latter has become increasingly perilous over the past 18 months, as evidenced by, inter alia, two very disturbing kidnappings in the wake of the 4 March expulsions and a recent attack on a Humanitarian Air Service helicopter flight, and has resulted in severely reduced access. On this issue, I look forward to seeing assurances from the Director-General of National Security on steps to improve access and security translated into a safer environment, particularly in state capitals and along main supply routes.

It was also agreed that the new high-level committee mechanism will be replicated at the state level in the three Darfurs to help eliminate the disconnect between federal theory and state practice that we have so often seen in the past.

While in the Sudan, I welcomed these positive steps and stressed that we, too, wished to work closely with the Government to create a much more predictable and facilitating environment for humanitarian work. But I also stressed that the value of these steps would be measured in improvements on the ground in terms of ease and security of operations and of the quality of assistance for the 4.7 million beneficiaries in Darfur, not least the 2.7 million displaced people included in that number. We need to see consistent and sustained implementation of what has been agreed. Meanwhile, I made clear that we would work with the Government on the so-called Sudanization of humanitarian work, in line with our global policy of building national and local capacity. The Government has helpfully made clear that Sudanization does not and will not entail the disappearance of international aid organizations. It is in any case important, as I reminded the Government, that local partners be credible, professional and able to work with all sections of society in an impartial manner.

However effective the efforts of the Government, the United Nations and remaining NGOs have been in preventing a further immediate crisis, they have not replaced, and cannot easily or rapidly replace, the capacity and skills lost. Current levels of assistance in some areas remain well below the necessary standards to which we subscribe. As we enter the "hunger gap" and rainy season, the needs and gaps will only be further exacerbated. In a number of camps around city centres and state capitals, the availability of basic services such as sanitation was significantly reduced, while primary health facilities lost important capacity in monitoring and surveillance. The World Health Organization, for example, has recently reported that, with the onset of the rainy season, the risk of a cholera outbreak has increased in such camps as Gereida, Kalma, Al Salam, Otash, Kass and Jebel Marra. Meanwhile, we have less visibility of what is happening in remote rural areas due to access constraints and continued insecurity.

We have also not yet begun to fill gaps created in less visible though no less vital areas, such as camp coordination, education, secondary and reproductive health, and livelihood assistance. In that context, I urged and continue to urge the Government to accept fully that work in the area of the protection of civilians is a vital part of modern humanitarian operations, as this Council knows and agrees. I hope that, in that context, the Government will now allow agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration to carry out their planned activities in areas such as camp coordination and verification of internally displaced person (IDP) registrations, in accordance with their global mandates.

As in past visits, the issue of IDP returns was once again discussed. I emphasized that the safe and voluntary return of civilians to their places of origin is a shared goal. Given the security situation on the ground today and the challenges facing the mediation effort, I do not believe that the current conditions in Darfur are yet conducive to large-scale return. However, as I also noted throughout my visit, the United Nations and partner agencies are keen to support returns wherever they meet international standards and are voluntary and sustainable.

While Darfur is the area of most immediate concern, the expulsions also had a serious potential impact on the three protocol areas and in eastern Sudan, where the expelled NGOs played critical roles in the provision of life-saving humanitarian, recovery and development assistance, with few alternatives available. It is helpful that the four international NGOs that recently received new registrations should be able to resume their work here.

Let me now turn to southern Sudan, where I travelled to Jonglei state to assess the impact of ongoing tribal violence. I was shocked not only by the unprecedented destructive nature of the violence, but also by the humanitarian toll. In the town of Akobo, I heard of the destruction of entire villages in the surrounding area, caused not least by the proliferation of more powerful weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades. With around 30,000 people displaced and possibly more than 1,000 killed or taken prisoner, including women and children, tribal reconciliation and disarmament must be a high priority for the Government of South Sudan, and indeed for the international community.

Such tribal conflicts there and elsewhere, with their political undercurrents, could even come to threaten progress since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. While the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) has taken measures to act as a buffer between the tribes by establishing temporary operating bases and is supporting reconciliation efforts, it is painfully clear that this will be a long and difficult process. I urge the Government of South Sudan to take the necessary measures to protect its civilians, mainly women and children, who have been targeted during those tribal clashes.

If that was not challenge enough, the renewed presence of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) south of Juba has also provoked large-scale killings and the displacement of as many as 100,000 people. Almost 20,000 refugees have also fled into the Sudan from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to escape the LRA savagery there. Military efforts to finish off the LRA have so far had limited success and its ravages continue unabated. I can only hope against hope that their leader, Joseph Kony, will still somehow come to sign the peace accord that he abandoned last summer. Meanwhile, United Nations agencies and NGOs, in close cooperation with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNMIS and regional Governments, are doing what they can to deal with the humanitarian consequences for civilians of the LRA's continued existence.

With a myriad of critical challenges facing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including the Abyei adjudication, the North-South border demarcation, elections and, ultimately, the referendum, the international community cannot afford to lose focus on southern Sudan. Whatever the inadequacies of the Government, the people there continue to need significant humanitarian assistance as well as major financial and development support, not least faced as they are with the devastating financial consequences of low oil prices and the global economic crisis. In that regard, I am particularly concerned about cuts to social services, primarily in health and education.

Let me conclude by summarizing where I believe we are. First, it is important to acknowledge and to welcome the recent efforts of the Government to respond positively to the need to work much more closely with the international humanitarian community, and the new steps that it has taken to support the requirements of its own people in Darfur through their own efforts. The next meeting of the expanded high-level committee, on 17 June, will be an important chance to measure where we are on implementation of agreements.

Secondly, we still need to see a return of humanitarian capacity and full freedom of movement to northern Sudan, further loosening of bureaucratic impediments and considerable improvement in the security environment to enable us to address the needs of the population, which will only be exacerbated by the rainy season.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, with the current level of civilian casualties, displacement and abduction of children, is of major concern. The Government of South Sudan, UNMIS and the international community must take active steps to prevent further destabilization.

Fourthly, to meet the requirements of the new situation, we will need to rework the financing needs for humanitarian assistance not just in Darfur, but throughout North and South Sudan. The results of a review of the Work Plan for Sudan should be available later this month. I look to both the donor community and the Government for continued and accelerated help.

Lastly, the Council will not be surprised to hear me say that what is needed above all is political progress towards a lasting settlement in Darfur, towards a durable understanding between the Sudan and Chad before current tensions and intermittent violence on both sides of the border explode out of control, and towards resolution of the many challenges in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and the South. Then the resources currently devoted to humanitarian assistance can be more productively used on the huge development tasks ahead.

That is a serious agenda indeed not only for the United Nations and humanitarian community, but also for the Governments concerned, the international community in general, and this Council in particular.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Holmes for his briefing.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

*The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.*